

**INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS
FORMATION**

**TANGAZA COLLEGE
Catholic University of Eastern Africa**

**CELIBACY AND INTIMACY: A GIFT OF GOD
AMONG THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF
KILIMANJARO**

**BY
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This is a long essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
diploma in Religious Formation

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this essay to all consecrated celibate people.

May the Holy Spirit inspire them to become ever more loving.

I also dedicate this work to my parents who formed me in Christian faith.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE MATERIAL USED HEREIN HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT TO ANY INSTITUTION. ALL SOURCES HAVE BEEN CITED IN FULL.

Sr. Germana Mkwizu

SR. GERMANA MKWIZU

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This essay invites you to look at the meaning of celibacy and intimacy as an integral dimension of religious life and virtue. I choose celibacy as a virtue and gift from God at the same time freely received. It ought to be an individual free choice. In order to make a mature choice for celibacy, the intimacy between, God, the neighbour, and us must be strengthened.

The study will remain within the limits and requirements as set out by the rule in the Academic Year Book of Tangaza College. The work totals three chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction and autobiography, statements of the study, objectives of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definitions of the key terms, the nature of celibacy and intimacy, the relationship between celibacy and intimacy, and the spirituality of religious life.

The second chapter will examine celibacy and intimacy according to the spirituality of the charism of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro (S.O.L.K.), its modality, celibacy and intimacy in relation to the *Pare* culture or tradition, and celibacy and intimacy as a gift of God.

The third chapter will outline how celibacy and intimacy are challenged in today's world, the struggle with celibacy and intimacy as a gift of God, theological foundation of intimacy and celibacy, the application of the study and personal reflections and conclusions.

1.1. AUTOBIOGRAPHY FOR THE STUDY

Soon after completing the primary level, I joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro. I did my aspirancy for three years because I was too young to be accepted as a candidate. As the time went on, I started experiencing body changes. There were signs, which were not familiar to me when I was undergoing this experience. Meanwhile, when I was in primary school with my friends, who also wanted to be a religious, we were discussing religious life. We thought that a nun should not have body changes, such as menstrual periods because this was a sign of having children. I thought that situation I was undergoing was God's way of telling me that I did not have a vocation to sisterhood. Because of fear, I did not share with others my feelings about what happened. Through prayer, however, I found my way. The fruit of my prayer was the courage and ability to share with one of my classmate, Anthonia Luca, now she is Sister Yohana Shantal. She told me that such a situation was normal. If I had not experience this thing, I would not allowed to join the congregation. I felt relaxed, thanking God for the first signs of His call in my life. It was by coincidence that when I joined candidacy and postulancy, the formator taught us about human sexuality. I tried to grasp and understand what she was teaching.

In the course of the time, while in Noviciate the Novice Mistress taught about the vow of chastity, and she mentioned the difficulties encountered in celibate life. This was like a spark that really enlightened my situation. Keenly listening as she was sharing her personal experience and also my colleagues as

they shared about the same situation, I recognized that I was not the only one having such an experience. I was encouraged that these experiences were never a sign of not being called toward the sisterhood vocation. I shared with courage with the Novice Mistress, Sr. Daria, and she readily assisted me to persevere. Her comment on the Gospel (Mtt. 19:12) helped me to be patient and understand what it meant to live a celibate life. By following her teaching, I was enlightened and made aware that sexuality is a gift from God and it is part and parcel of human nature, which when freely and willingly offered, makes an individual person perfect and holy. Celibacy is a gift but also a task that requires care and self-control in so far as my choice of becoming a religious is concerned. Because of my study and experience on celibacy, I chose to write more on celibacy and intimacy. I want to know about celibacy, for the sake of the Kingdom of God and the nurturing of His people. I want to know not only for myself but I also want to enlighten others who are considering being religious which requires a total self-giving to God through living a celibate life.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE STUDY.

The content or basis of this study is from the personal experience I have undergone and lived as one of the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro. The vows we take are not ours but rather they are a gift from God. As it is stated in our constitution, "The state of perfect chastity is a special gift from God, to those who accept God's word and are enabled to follow it for the sake the Kingdom of

God.”¹ In Mtt. 19:11-12 Jesus emphasized that “Not all can accept (this) word but only those to whom that is granted. Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Hence the vows we are taking are gifts from God for our perfection and a way of giving God’s service to His people.

Being a religious and an African, the challenge has been, “How is one able to live celibacy which is viewed in the eyes of many African as abnormal?” To respond to this challenge, I would say that God is beyond what human beings think are abnormal and impossible. As a result, He has offered to the religious the gift of celibacy so that they can be in the position to serve His people freely without any strings attached. Of course, the question of intimacy is: “How can one just live without having an intimate relationship with his or her fellow being?” It is true that such terminology might draw its imagination and thinking to what can be termed as a psychological arena, but that is not my concern here. Intimacy itself is a gift from God and before we are intimate with a human being, we first and foremost must enter into the intimacy with God. That means we experience that God loves us first and cares for us. Hence the returning of this love is our personal intimate relationship with Him. This intimate relationship is nourished in our daily life especially when we encounter Him in prayer, which is the basis of our intimacy with Him.

¹ The Constitution of Sister of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro. ‘Celibacy’, Tabora: Tanganyika Mission Press. 1986, N.65

1.3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY.

As far as objective of the study are concerned, we cannot treat all of them but a few of them are as follows: First of all, to expand our knowledge of the celibate life and how to live it. Second, we have to know how to educate our young religious about chastity, which has lost its basic meaning today. Third, we have to educate the society at large of the meaning of chastity and intimacy especially those who have opted for celibate life. Fourth, to find out how an African lives a celibate life while traditionally he or she is required to procreate. Fifth, to give more information about our human sexuality: biologically, socially, psychologically and spiritually and also to challenge the myths and erroneous ideas about sex and sexuality. Finally, to help ourselves on our own sexuality as well as those we are entrusted to accompany in the formation houses.

1.4. SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY.

This study is not meant to solve the so-called religious sexual misconduct problem, but to help us in perseverance of the celibate and intimate life. Also the scope of this study is to realize that celibacy and intimacy should be viewed as a gift from God for the sake of the Kingdom. However, the study is not meant to deal with other areas of celibacy such as psychosexual intimacy of married life. The study will focus more on religious celibate and intimate life.

1.5. DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS

(I) CELIBACY

Celibacy is the state of not being married nor intending to be married especially in vowed religious life. In general it refers to not having sexual relationship. Vowed celibacy, or consecrated celibacy, is a gift from God to His church. It enables us to share with the church in the universal love of Christ, who came to “serve and give His life as a ransom for many.” (Mtt. 20:28). Van Kaam calls it “the Christian vow of respect love.”²

(ii) CELIBATE

This term refers to a person who foregoes all directly willful indulgence in pleasure or genital sex whether with others or alone.³ Within religious life it means to be empty for God, to be free and open for His presence, to be available for His service. Mary Anne Huddleston defines celibate life as: “The celibate life is a tough and slightly unnatural way to live. It requires knowledge of mortification that is as concrete as an empty bed each morning.”⁴

(iii) CONSECRATED PERSON.

² A. Van Kaam, *The Vowed Life*, Denville: Dimension Books, 1968, P. 169.

³ Mary Anne Huddleston, *Celibate Loving*, New York: Paulist Press, 1984, P. 5-17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, P. 6.

Is a person set apart for God and for others. He or she lives the value of the Gospel in his or her life as a witness to the world. Our life is thus consecrated by vow to the service of our neighbours in fidelity to Gospel values.

(iv) INTIMACY.

Is a state of having close relationship or friendship. In this relationship the person shares his or her deepest joys, sorrow, ambitions, fears, loves and hopes with someone admired, trusted and faithful.⁵ It is also the inexplicable rapport between two persons that enables each to reveal to the other his or her deep thoughts, emotions, drives, desires and dreams that usually defy articulation.

(v) S.O.L.K.

It is an abbreviation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro.

(vi) SEXUALITY.

Sexuality is a relationship power, not merely the capacity to perform sexual acts. As such it draws us out of our own self in order to establish interpersonal bonds and commitment to others, both men and women. Thus, sexuality is the ground of the human person's capacity to love and implies the

⁵ David J. Hassel, Dark Intimacy, New York: Paulist Press, 1986, P. 23.

qualities of sensitivity, understanding, intimacy, openness to others, compassion and mutual support.⁶

(vii). CHASTITY.

Chastity is a capacity to control the sexual instinct and to integrate it in the overall development of the person in his or her vocation to love. All human beings are created by God to love and to be loved, to fulfill their vocations in different ways.⁷

(viii) SPIRITUALITY.

According to Raymond J. Gunzel, Spirituality is a way leading to a point in divine life where our minds and hearts are opened to an awareness that all things are in God; that separate “otherness,” the “not I” are in fact, delusion.”⁸

(ix) CHARISM.

The term charism means: “Gifts given by the Spirit to the faithful of every rank, making them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.”⁹

⁶ John P. Mossi, “Embodied Love in Celibate Ministry,” Human Development, Vol. 15, N.3, 1994, P. 31.

⁷ Robert C. Broderick, The Catholic Encyclopedia, (New York: Thomas Nelson Lac. Publishers, 1975), P. 108-109.

⁸ Raymond J. Gunzel, Celibacy renewing the Gifts Releasing the Power, Kansas City: National Catholic Reporter Publishing, 1988, P. 42 - 43

1.6. THE NATURE OF CONSECRATED CELIBACY.

Following the example of Jesus Christ and for the sake of the Kingdom of God, we choose celibacy with full freedom, giving all our love to God who is supreme love and to our fellow human beings. Thus, the nature of consecrated celibacy is the total self donation to God dwelling in His holy Temple.¹⁰ Consecrated celibacy is something more than simply not being married because celibates must be living witnesses to sexual and spiritual uprightness. Celibate as sexual - beings, who are living the love of Christ in a self-donation and joyfully in a responsible way, can recover from the sense of ordinary intimacy and give a witness to this inclusive way of loving. In fact, this leads to a spiritual friendship with Christ.

Evangelical celibacy does not deny the value of human affections but it transforms them and tends to promote mature generosity and refinement of heart. Although we are aware of the radical renunciation, celibacy requires for us that we bind ourselves by vows to perfect continence in celibacy. To remain faithful to our commitment requires maturity of mind, self-mystery and well-balanced character. In all efforts we rely on the strength that comes from the grace of God and a close union with Christ. His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who also is our Mother, is our example and support. Our celibacy becomes meaningful

⁹ J. M. Tillard, Charism, Brussels: Lumen Vitae Publications, 1975, P. 41.

¹⁰ Hildebrand Dietrich, Celibacy and Crisis of Faith, London: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970, P. 38.

through the unique way that we love others as celibates. Celibacy does not make us better than others; it is unique way of loving, a valid life-style that can bring us to fulfilment of life by positive gift of ourselves to others. Celibate life is offered to us as a treasure hidden in the field.¹¹ It is offered to us as an opportunity, and not as a privilege of caste that make us better than others.

Religious celibacy is a love relationship in which the Holy Spirit becomes the primary bond of union and great gift in its exchange of love. Celibacy, self-giving, offers a deep fulfillment of self as well. As a result, a person freely forgoes the so-called direct gratification of sexual prerogatives of the members of Lord's people. For celibacy carries with it a holy vacancy that is a space for God alone. However, all Christians are called to holiness by virtue of their baptism. Even if it is not all that can lead a celibate life, yet Christ invites us all to observe the virtue of chastity. Chastity within marriage emphasizes the point that an African can sacrifice sexual pleasure for the sake of life. Being able to relate to this can help our local people to understand the concept of consecrated chastity in religious life. All Christians, religious and lay are called to love one another in a more open way just as the greatest commandment inspires us to do. But the religious people are called to this life in a radical way towards the Gospel life. Jesus emphasized to love one another when He said in Jn.15: 12; "This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you." This celibacy is a call to a life of unconditional love rather than isolation. Such then is a life of warmth and involvement with others as all the same children of God. It avoids coldness and discrimination.

¹¹ Quentin Hakenewerth, For The Sake of the Kingdom, U.S.A.: Liturgical Press, P. 17.

Those who opt for celibacy are called celibates. These are the people who do not attach themselves to any particular person and remain for others. Their relationship with God is the beginning, the source and the goal of human endeavour. Celibacy helps the celibates to make their lives into a visible witness to God as their first priority in life, and also as a sign to all people. For without this inner sanctity, then our lives lose the contact with its source and goal.¹²

All creatures, which were created in the likeness and image of God, belong to God Himself. Hence, a world trying so hard to create better relationship but torn by loneliness and conflicts, celibacy become an important key to a deep-rooted witness. It encouraged all of us to make a space in our hearts special for God who in the incarnation showed love for us, by sending His only son Jesus Christ, who revealed to us the Father and taught us that we should love one another because God had loved us first. (1 Jn. 4: 19- 21).

1.7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSECRATED CELIBACY AND INTIMACY.

It is somehow difficult to show how the terms are related, but they are so related because both of them have the same source, God's gift. One thing that we aim to maintain and make it clear is that celibate life is one way of loving and fostering our intimacy with Christ. This is done through prayer life. Thus, if some one is not careful, serious, as well as being fully committed, then celibacy

¹² Henry James, Celibacy in Religious Life, New York: St. Paul Edition, 1980, P.243.

becomes a meaningless burden. The celibate is devoid of life giving possibilities unless he or she examines, rekindles and renews the commitment to Christ and others in a joyful surrender.¹³

Still it is difficult to state clearly whether celibacy and intimacy are related. According to Keith Clark, we all come to religious life with a need of intimacy and fulfilment. Therefore, the two are related.¹⁴

1.8. CELIBACY AND INTIMACY THE SPIRITUALITY OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.

We, as consecrated people, choose not to marry for religious reasons. According to Sandra Schneiders, these reasons are “to achieving the identity or the sense of self; achieving intimacy or the capacity to transcend the self in self-giving love to be able to cross the boundaries of the self and allow those boundaries to be crossed without losing one’s identity but, on the contrary, enhancing it; and the undertaking of caring responsibility for the next generation through physical or spiritual parenting.”¹⁵

Celibacy and intimacy will not grow without personal relationship with God. A consecrated celibate must be integrated into a living and loving relationship with God in a healthy personality. For this reason the celibate will

¹³ Richard Sipe Celibacy, 'A Way of Loving, Living and Serving,' U.S.A: Triumph Books Liguori, 1981, P. 2-3.,

¹⁴ Keith Clark, Being, Sexual and Celibate, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1986, P. 143.

¹⁵ Sandra M. Schneiders, New Wineskins, Re-imagining Religious Life Today, New York: Paulist Press, 1986, P. 218.

bear fruits of the Spirit: “these are love, joy, peace, patient, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22).”

In general divine relationship is God’s initiative in guiding us towards the right way. In understanding the spirituality of celibacy, we ought to base our minds and spirit on the light of divine revelation. Celibacy is a way of life giving relationship with men, women and ultimately the entire creation. But above all like Jesus, we are celibate chaste because of the overwhelming presence of God’s kingdom, which keeps growing in us.

So it is possible to have an intimate friend as a celibate. Celibates do not care because they have to or are expected to but because they cannot help it. When we hurt they hurt; when we are happy they are too. A celibate’s friends may not always be able to be at his or her side in times of crisis or rejoicing. Part of the celibate situation is that other responsibilities which belong to the primary life commitment, distance and other factors, may make physical nearness impossible at times, even in times of real need. But we know that wherever the friend is, he or she is with us. We are not humanly alone. This does not abolish the realization, integral to the celibate experience, that we are not ‘number one,’ not the primary or exclusive love of any other human being. But it does help us gradually to integrate that realization into our own primary love, the love for Christ, so that the loneliness of celibate life does not become a bitter isolation but a mature solitude sweetened and deepened by genuine human love that is neither possessed nor possessive but nonetheless real and intense.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid., pg,225.

Apart from that celibate intimacy (friendship) entails a conscious choice. “In a way, one makes a choice to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own and other’s spiritual growth.¹⁷ If a person has freedom to choose this kind of life he or she will be able to cope in any situation in his or her life by the help of the Holy Spirit who works in him or her. It is freely to choose because celibacy “ is a freely chosen dynamic state, usually vowed that involves an honest and sustained attempt to live without direct sexual gratification in order to serve others productively for a spiritual motive.”¹⁸

¹⁷ John Powel, Fully Human Alive, New York: Society of St. Paul, 1976, 56.

¹⁸ Richard Sipe, Celibacy, A Way of Loving, Living and Serving, U.S.A: Ligouri Mission, 1994, P. 40.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. CELIBACY AND INTIMACY IN RELATION TO THE CHARISM OF S.O.L.K.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS CHARISM?

Every congregation has its own charism that leads its members to perfection. Charism can be defined as follows:

- (a). As an activity of God's Spirit.
- (b). Through human agency.
- (c). For others.
- (d). For the building of the church.¹⁹

In Romans 11:29 St. Paul uses the word charism in the sense of the combined gifts given to the people of Israel. Also in Roman 5:15 and 6:23 it appears charism, the grace by which a person is saved from sin and brought to eternal life. Ephesians 4:11 presents it as particular gifts and abilities freely granted by the Holy Spirit to individuals for the enrichment of their Christian life and that of the community.²⁰

Our charism, (S.O.L.K.) has a sole influence from St. Benedict, which is based on "Prayer and Work." (Ora et Labora). We value these gifts to serve others in different ways. We witness Christ in our daily activities. Each community is

¹⁹ New Catholic Encyclopedia, New York: Washington, Volume III, Article by R. J. Tapia, 1981, P. 460-462.

²⁰ Patric Rogers, The Few in Charge in the Many, Rome, Gregorian, 1977, P. 180.

called to this work of the Holy Spirit. "It is he who gave gifts to mankind; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastorals and teachers," (Eph.4: 11). He granted them the gifts. Through these works we proclaim Christ and make Him known to the people. The Spirit of God acts differently through different charisms in the church so that we have different congregation at service according to inspiration of a particular founder. It is "the Spirit Himself who guide us along the difficulties and new paths of mission."²¹

We, therefore, choose celibacy in religious life so as to seek more perfection in the Spirit. We have to be a contemplative with attention of following Christ. Karl Rahner says, "The following of Christ witnesses in the church priority of receiving over generosity hence the charismatic nature."²² Sebastian Moore says that the only hand that actively distributes is the one that is first of all ready to open in receiving.²³ So charism is not the product of man's ability or sanctity, but the seal of the Spirit.

2.1. CELIBACY AND INTIMACY AS A MODEL IN THE CONGREGATION OF S.O.L.K.

The Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro, like any other religious, are women whose lives are all based in love. Christians incorporated in their spouse

²¹ John Paul II, The Mission of the Church, Encyclical Letter, "Redemptoris Mission," Nairobi: St. Paul Publication, 1987, P. 87-91.

²² Lumen Gentium, N. 40.

²³ Sebastian Moore, God is a New Language, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967. P.29.

and sharing in his life and mission in liturgy and apostolate.²⁴ We are Christians who responded to God's call by dedicating ourselves to his service and to the welfare of humanity in the religious life. It is our intention to follow Christ more closely in the spirit of Evangelical Counsels so that the grace of baptism may bear more fruits in us.²⁵

In pronouncing our vows we make chastity, poverty and obedience permanent obligations in life, and we are distinguished from the other members in the church. The profession of Evangelical Counsels is a special way of belonging and committing oneself to God. It is expressed in the service and worship as a proof of supreme love by renouncing the world and its good things, which may prevent us from giving ourselves wholly to God.²⁶ By our profession we are completely dedicated to the love and service of God. We are women who have given ourselves wholly to God so that we may live in the fulfilment of our duty to Him.

Through our consecration we are ever striving to be close to Christ as He is to the Father. He is our spouse and the true image of the visible God. This leads us to the words of St. Paul "For me to live is Christ," (Phil. 1:21). We live the life that Christ Himself lived, and we try to be the likeness of Him until we say again, "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me," (Gal. 2:22).

Religious love is the result of God's grace perfecting nature. After a religious has come to know already what is nature, they makes a free choice not to have any sexual relations to fulfil their nature. However, natural feelings and

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Joseph Halley, (ed), The Sisters in America Today, Indiana: Fides Publication Incorporation, 1965, P. 5.

²⁶ Elio Gambari, The Global Mystery of the Religious Life, U.S.A: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975, P. 99.

powers of nature will of course live on in them. The S.O.L.K. have made the deliberate choice to be used by God for the expression of holy, non-genital love. This love is thus extended to all. Such love will never seek for its own, but only for what God wishes. It is a tender, celibate love because human sexuality is a great and good gift from God. Celibates are called to serve God and their fellow people as sexed persons, not as persons whose sexuality are some how sterilized or taken away.²⁷ Their love is not driven from their sexual feelings but it is ever there.

Let us now conclude this part with this words of the Fathers of the church who affirms that: “Religious are Christians like other Christians and women like other women who are called so that they may enjoy a special gift of grace in the church and may contribute each in her own way to the serving mission of the church”²⁸

2.2. CELIBACY AND INTIMACY IN RELATION TO THE PARE CULTURE.

According to A. Shorter, “There is no human culture where celibacy is a norm.”²⁹ Like most of African culture, there is an emphasis on marriage in the Pare culture which leads to procreation. That is to say, procreation, reproduction and transmission of human life are one of the most important values of life. As

²⁷ Philips Keane, *Sexual Morality, “A Catholic Perspectives,”* New York: Paulist Press, 1977, P. 97.

²⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, N. 44.

²⁹ Aylward Shorter, *Celibacy and African Culture*, Nairobi: Daughters of St. Paul, 1998, P. 16.

they believe that their personal immortality depends very much on how they live their life in society. If they display an excellent, well-integrated life here while they are still alive, they will be remembered long after. The living-dead are those who are dead but still alive in their offspring and achievements. Thus the Pare people also believe that procreation is the absolute way of ensuring that an African is not cut off from personal immortality.³⁰

However, procreation alone is not enough to ensure a positive remembrance after death. As Mugambi and Kirima point out, a person who does not behave properly towards relatives or community, or is an enemy of established laws and customs destroys his chances of becoming a favourable member of the living -dead.³¹

In the Pare culture one will be considered not alive if she or he was not engaged in transmitting life to other human beings. We will judge from the explanation that procreation as such was an essential aspect of being alive whereby person-hood was the attribute of living and reproducing people.³² For to be alive is to be a person and one had to generate children.

Celibacy as such in the Pare culture never existed unless someone was totally barren or impotent. No one in his or her life could have opted for celibate life unless one was abnormal, confused or running away from the responsibilities of taking care of children of family life.³³

³⁰ Ibid., pg. 26.

³¹ John Mugambi and Nicodemus Kirima, The African Religios Heritage, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 110.

³² Kwame Gieke, African cultural value, Nirobi: Paulinist Press, 1995, P. 85.

³³ Mrutu, Interviewen on 15th June 2000 by the author.

This is so vivid because normally those who go for religious life or rather opt for celibate life, their parents are isolated in some of tribal occasions like dowry and marriage ceremonies, for they are seen to be exploiters in one way or another. “How can they eat our food and drink, i.e., *dengetua*, the local brewed beer, of our children while they allowed theirs to go away from the tribe? When are we going to drink theirs?” Therefore, celibate life for a Pare person was seen as incapable of managing marriage and family life.³⁴ However, chastity in the Pare culture was honoured. Young ones were strictly forbidden to engage in any kind of sexual intercourse. Hence, the so-called sex education was preserved until one reached the adult age and the proper moment was during initiation. On the one hand, the girls who were virgins on the marriage day were highly honoured together with their parents. It was a gift which was rewarded. On the other hand, if it happened that a girl was pregnant before marriage, the girl was to be killed and thrown far away without a proper burial. All the same if a boy and a girl were caught committing adultery, the two were harshly punished and they were killed instantly so that others could learn from them.³⁵

Therefore, we cannot talk of celibacy among the Pare because children are the happiness of Pare culture. Chastity, however, remains the order and duty of everyone. Even in marriage the wives and husbands have to remain faithful to their spouses. Anybody who attempts to break his or her chastity is liable to punishment. Thus, religious celibacy and the Pare culture are two contradictory phenomena. A lot still needs to be done to educate our people about this special

³⁴ Agatha Msofe, Interviewed by the author on 25th June 2000.

³⁵ John Kateri, Interviewed by the author on 28th June, 2000.

gift of God. Hence, there is a need for a method of christianising this culture so that celibacy as a Christian virtue, especially for the sake of the kingdom of God can find meaning in Pare culture.

2.3. CELIBACY AND INTIMACY AS A GIFT OF GOD AMONG THE SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF KILIMANJARO.

Introduction.

Who are these Sisters?

The Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro, like any other sisters, are “the women whose lives are motherly creativity in love. These Christians women incorporated in their spouse and share in His life and mission of liturgy and apostolate.”³⁶ They are Christians who responded to God’s call by dedicating themselves to His service and the welfare of humankind in religious life. It is their intention to follow Christ more closely in the spirit of the Evangelical Counsels so that the grace of baptism may bear more fruit in them.³⁷

(a) The Short History of Congregation.

His Excellency Henry Gogarty C.S.Sp founded the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro missionary congregation. It started in 1931 and is located in North

³⁶ Joseph Halley (ed.), *The Sisters in America Today*, Indiana: Fides Publication Incorporation, 1965, N.5.

³⁷ Cf. S.C.D.W., *Sacris religion Vinculis* N.1

East of Tanzania, Kilimanjaro Region. It is in a district known as Rombo in a place known as Huruma where our motherhouse is built. Bishop Gogarty started this congregation in order to help priests in apostolic work, in spiritual, social and practical aspects of life. For these reasons sisters participate in different works like teaching catechism, teaching in primary school, home craft, gardening, sewing, cookery, secondary schools, colleges, animal husbandry and nursing. All these targeted the promotion of integral human development in Kilimanjaro and beyond.

(b) The Role of S.O.L.K. as an African Woman.

We as religious consecrate ourselves to God by taking public vows and living community life according to Can. N. 607. "Religious are related to the church by special bond...They are incorporated more deeply to the mystery of Christ, and more intimately to the divine service of building up His body. Religious are actively ecclesial living for Christ and His body, the church in commitment to its universal salvic mission."³⁸

The practice of chastity, poverty and obedience as a permanent obligation is the mark for a religious and distinguishes her from other members of the church. The profession of Evangelical Counsels is a special way of belonging to God. It is expressed in service and in worship as a proof of supreme love, and by renouncing the world and its good things, which may prevent her from giving

³⁸ Sr. M. Rose, Religious life, A Mystery in Christ and the Church, New York, 1974, P.75.

herself wholly to God.³⁹ By their profession, the S.O.L.K Sisters are completely dedicated to the love and service of God. They are women who give themselves wholly to God so that they can live and be dutiful to Him.

It must be obvious that a S.O.L.K. as a woman has responded magnificently to Christ's call to the Evangelical fullness of the gift of herself. The Holy Father Pope John Paul II when addressing the sisters in Zaire during his first visit to the African Continent said that it seems there is in a woman's body and heart an extraordinary disposition to make her life a royal offering to Christ as the one bridegroom. This femininity, which is often considered by a certain public opinion has sacrificed in a crazy way in religious life is as a matter of fact refunded and expanded on a high plan: that of the Kingdom of God. For example, physical fecundity, which has such a great place in an African tradition, as well as attachment to the family, are values that can be lived by the African sisters, within a far wider and ever renewed community, and can be developed into an absolutely astonishing spiritual fecundity. It is in this perspective that religious chastity, very faithfully observed, stands out clearly as a preferential love of the Lord and a complete availability for others.⁴⁰

We have chosen to describe the S.O.L.K. as African woman in this sense that the sisters being African have a mission to African society, and they will share what they themselves have from their African background, and they will know the needs of the people.

³⁹ Elio Gambari, The Global Mystery of the Religious Life, U.S.A: Daughters of St. Paul 1975, P.99

⁴⁰ John Paul II, African Adress, Italia; Editrice Missionaria, Bologna, 1981, P. 50.

In conclusion, we S.O.L.K. still live the spirit of our founder which responds to the needs of the church with our full capacity to follow our motto: "All for the glory of God and for the restoration of human dignity."⁴¹

⁴¹ The Constitution of the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro, The Prayer, Tabora: Tanganyika Press, 1986, P. 12.

CHAPTER THREE.

3.0. HOW CELIBACY AND INTIMACY IS CHALLENGED IN TODAY'S WORLD.

Consecrated celibacy is unique among vows professed by religious. Each one choose this life to do the will of God, and each one decided himself or herself to serve the church. Sandra Schneiders says: "It is the only vow whose content has been constant factor in all forms of religious life throughout history. From the time of the consecrated virgins and widows of the first century to our own day religious life has always involved a commitment to life long celibacy. Also celibacy is the only one of the three vows whose object is, strictly speaking, an Evangelical 'Counsel' in the sense that it is a response to an invitation not addressed to the Christians."⁴²

In African tradition, sexual activity was the subject of much symbolism and ritual. It also entered literally, or metaphorically into rituals which were not professedly concerned with sex. We have seen that procreation itself had a religious character and that the family was central to religious belief and practices. Sexual activity was sacred because it concerned transmission of life-life that originates with God, who is the source of life.⁴³

⁴² Sandra Schneiders, New Wine Skins Re-imagining Religious Life, U.S.A: Publishing by Paulist, Press, 1986, P. 114.

⁴³ Aylward Shorter, Celibacy and African Culture, Nairobi. Daughters of St. Paul 1998, p. 20.

In our African cultures and religious beliefs alike, words like father, mother, brother or sister are very important and need to continue to be of great importance.⁴⁴ Accordingly, they present one of the humanity's achievements because being a father implies that love and respect will be given from a wife and children. And being a mother implies that respect and love will govern a woman's feeling towards her husband and children.⁴⁵

In African tradition, for instance, procreation is the most valuable because the society was structured so as to promote the procreation of children. The African family was seen as an open community that reaches back to the past through the ancestors and forward toward the future through the yet unborn. Procreation was an essential part of being alive. Consequently, the death of a childless man or woman was final and tragic. Whereas the death of a person who has many children was seen as not so sad simply because that person lives in his or her children especially through the naming. A woman or a man was valued according to their ability of having children. Consequently, female barrenness and male impotence were even a greater shame in the family.⁴⁶ There is a vivid example from Aylward Shorter in his book, *Songs and Symbol of Initiation*, which says: "Sexual activity in traditional Africa was essentially a dialogue with the future, a communication with the unborn. It made it possible for the unborn to be released into this world. There was, therefore, no place for the bachelor in traditional African society. A bachelor was considered selfish and anti-social, besides being a danger to the social order, to him and to others. The Kimbu of

⁴⁴ Phina Mmakola, *Celibacy in religious Life, and Priesthood*, Nairobi: Tangaza, 1999, P. 40.

⁴⁵ Howard Bleitchneet al, *Celibacy for the Kingdom*, Theological reflections and practical Perspectives,

⁴⁶ Baltimore, Md., St. Mary's Seminary and Universty, 1991 P. 10-11.

Tanzania have a song in which a bachelor imagines married couple mocking him: "Wherever I go they laugh at me they say: he is not married.... bachelorhood, bachelorhood a bad business, a bad bussiness."⁴⁷ Bachelorhood was irresponsible and subversive and people of marriageable age who did not marry were suspect if not social misfits.

Procreation was a religious obligation and God was seen as the supreme ancestor. Thus, it also involved the blessing of God since all life comes from Him all social prestige, and all economic wealth.⁴⁸

However, when we bring it into the experience of our faith, we find that Jesus builds on and transforms the so-called natural relationship. He taught us to pray to God as Abba or Daddy or *Vava* (Mt. 5:9-13), the term that implies intimacy. Jesus wants us to see ourselves as a brothers and sisters in the new light. As a result a family is in the paradise of the Kingdom of God. It is also extends the zone of peace, love, forgiveness and compassion.

Jesus' celibacy can only be understood in terms of his own cultural context. It must be set against the background of the understanding of sexuality, marriage, and celibacy in the world of the first century Judaism. For the Jew of Jesus' time celibacy was not a choice. Marriage was a duty of every Jew. Children were a real assurance against the final victory of death, both for the individual and for the people. And of the Jews marriage would issue the Messiah who would finally deliver Israel from sin and slavery.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Aylward Shorter, Songs and Symbols of Initiation, Monography 1, Nairobi; CHIEA, 1987, P. 47.

⁴⁸ Gilbert Aveshake, The meaning of Christian Priesthood, Transpader: Macscumais, 1989, P. 121.

⁴⁹ Sandra M. Schneiders, New Wine Skins, Re-imagining Religious Life today, U.S.A; Paulist Press, 1986 P. 133.

With the question of the family, Jesus' understanding was very wide and inclusive. For when he was told that his family was looking for him, he replied, "Who are my mother and brother?" In answer to this challenging question he said, "My mother and my brother are the ones who do the will of God (Mk.3: 33-35)." In a way, this aspect freed him from the constraints of his family.⁵⁰

Jesus chose not to marry but situated himself freely in relationship both to his sexuality and to his future. For him sexuality was not fate but destiny. His sexuality did not tell Jesus how to be human: rather his humanity defined the meaning of sexuality to him. By choosing not to marry, he chose not to assume the male role in a patriarchal family. He was permanently excluded by his own choice from active participation in patriarchy, i.e., in the male domination of women. What we see in the Gospel is a result of this self-imposed exclusion. Jesus considered himself free to relate to all women not as a marriageable man or one seeking a wife, not as a single male exercising the privileges of the double standard in the use and abuse of women, but as one person to another. Jesus' culturally strange way of treating women as persons and as equals disturbed his followers. (Jn. 4: 27).

In a way, this is the most challenging question. For when someone embraces celibate life one regards all people as his family. As a result one frees him or her from the chain of the family. He or she leaves more room for the extended family of God, which includes everyone regardless of their race, status and ethnicity. The living of celibate life, therefore, is meant to establish the most universal love and family that includes all.

⁵⁰ Phina J. Mmakola, Celibacy in Religious Life, and Priesthood, Nairobi Tangaza, 1999.P.41.

3.1 THE STRUGGLE WITH CELIBACY AND INTIMACY AS A GIFT OF GOD.

It is a fact that celibacy and intimacy as a challenge at the same time remains unclear to the most people despite the big library of literature that tries to clarify all these terms. The way to clarify and to make them understood is to consider them as a gift of God in our lives and not threats against our culture and burdens. Perhaps the question will remain: "How as a matter of principle does living a committed celibate life not make sense?"⁵¹ It cannot make sense to someone who does not regularly take time to be touched and moved by God's Spirit especially in prayer.

In celibacy, God offers Himself as a companion. It is true that God is a friend of every human being and Christian in a special way. However, my conviction is that he sometimes wants to establish a special friendship, and a refreshing and exhilarating oneness through a personal conversation or dialogue through the communication of his love through a union that excludes distractions.

In intimacy there is never harmful manipulation or any trial to convince someone of anything beyond what one believes is good for that person.⁵² Normally, intimacy is possible only after one has known a person long enough that he or she can affirm him or her correctly because of his appreciation of that person's gifts. As a result, he affirmed that for the time being the one who is

⁵¹ Phina J. Mmakola, Celibacy in Religious Life and Priesthood, Nairobi, Tangaza College, 1999, pg. 41.

⁵² Sandra M. Schneiders, New Wine, Re-imagining Religious Today, U.S.A: Paulist Press, 1986, pg. 55.

affirming regards him or her as *the most* important person. At that very moment there is other preoccupation or person who is more important than you and your well-being. There is unselfconscious realization that after this time no other person and other concerns will preoccupy either of us.

A moment of intimacy occurs when the goal of life's deepest pursuit is surprisingly met. But having reached that goal the moment remains intimate only with the willingness on each one to surrender what has been achieved.¹

As then intimacy is seen as a gift of God especially to a celibate when he or she is in a close conversation and encounter with the creator. This then can be in joys, sorrows and difficulties, but expecting all in humility. On the one hand God enjoys one's presence in his or her mission and service. On the other hand, one enjoys God's guidance and protection on his or her state of life. As a result there is no hiding of concern for each other.

Again our intimacy with God involves allowing God to know us and understand us even when we cannot understand ourselves. God is a lover, Father of true compassion and mercy. Also God allows us to be ourselves and reveal ourselves.⁵³ One feels that God feels the same as Himself. As a result when we become open and we reveal ourselves to each other, something grows between us. One thing that helps us to realize this type of intimacy is that there must be an attraction to love Him who loves us first. We love people because they are created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 26-27), and Christ himself who died for us.

¹ Quentin Hakewerth, SM., *For the sake of the kingdom*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, pp. 48-50

⁵³ *Ibid.* 36.

The two gifts (celibacy and intimacy) are connected when a celibate person allows God to have him or her always. Hence, the celibate becomes intimate with God when he or she commits to a life of praying. This happens especially when an individual discloses himself or herself in the listening and hearing of the other whom he or she feels safe and related to. In this case we are truly safe when we are with God.

A celibate comes to know that God knows him or her because he or she has made himself or herself known by Him. That is why Pope John Paul II considers those who are called for celibate life as being graced with a sufficient degree of psychosexual maturity and a deep and authentic life of prayer and healthy human relationship.⁵⁴

Celibacy is a way of living one's gift of sexuality in a positive and life affirming way. It is very true that being a celibate it excludes genital intimacy for a religious to engage in genital intimacy it automatically violates the word of his or her celibate commitment and consecration to chastity.²

As a gift of God, a celibate will never doubt about God's binding love for himself or herself and others. The celibate feels that God has accepted him or her in, e.g., foolishness and self-deceptions as well as in the moments of fidelity and clear thinking.

The celibate feels that he or she is being invited to be God's ally and partner in loving God and other human beings. As such God asks for celibates to love each other as well as others in ways which are appropriate to the loved and

⁵⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Doble*.

² Quentin Hakenewerth, SM., *For the sake of the kingdom*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, pp. 34-35.

loved one. Friends, lovers and spouses are indeed 'God's gifts.' Also celibate relationship is a gift of God to people.⁵⁵

3.2. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF INTIMACY AND CELIBACY.

Scripture often speaks of the nearness of humanity and God. God has been establishing the close relationship with humankind throughout the story of salvation.

To find the biblical roots of the vow of chastity, we must also scan carefully the biblical landscape. As in the case of poverty, the close relationship among all of the vows becomes apparent.

From the beginning of Christian history, those who have chosen celibate chastity have appealed to the famous text in Mathew 19 as a biblical foundation for their decision. After Jesus has proclaimed his teaching on marriage and apparently revoked the possibility of divorce, the stunned disciples asked him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. But he said to them, 'Not all can receive this saying, but only those to whom it given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. The one who is able to receive this let them receive it (Mt. 19:10-12).'"

⁵⁵ Keith Clark, Being Sexual and Celibate, C.S.A:St. Paul Press, 1986. P.180.

Allow me, for a just moment, to reflect a bit on this passage. As I suspect you have heard many times in recent years the immediate applicability of this passage to celibate chastity has been put in question by modern biblical scholarship. The immediate issue in the passage is the question of marriage, not celibacy, and the state of being a 'eunuch' in this text probably applies to those who, because of Jesus' teaching, chose not to marry.

While this is true, I think, this text remains an important lead for discovering the biblical roots of the vow of chastity. We should be clear from the outset that the Bible has a most positive view of sexuality, not in a romantic sense, but as a vital human expression of God's creative power. The biblical injunction was to "increase and multiply." So children, particularly sons, of course, in a patriarchal and clan culture were not only a sign of blessing and security but an expression of obedience.

Barrenness and sterility, on the other hand, were a curse and a reason for ridicule. Even in Jesus' saying a "eunuch" for the sake of the Kingdom we catch the biblical perspective. How interesting that Jesus should use this word. No one was more contemptible from a Jewish perspective than the eunuch. The Bible has no hymns to virginity and few words of praise for the celibate life. More typical, is the wrenching picture of Hannah, tears, streaming down her face as she prays before the shrine of Shihoh, begging God to deliver her from the shame of barrenness. When Isaiah wished to portray the utter objection of Israel in exile, he chose the image of the virgin, one who is barren: "sing, or barren one, who did

not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail!” (Isaiah 54:1).⁵⁶

We might note parenthetically, that the other favourite passage used as a biblical foundation for the vow of chastity is 1 Corinthians 7 where Paul says that in the view of approaching end-time all should stay put in their state of life, but that his own preference is to be unmarried... why? Because Paul says, “The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord.” He says this and he assures them, not to lay any restraint upon them but “to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:32-35).”

The same note is struck here as in the passage from Matthew. Celibate chastity becomes a Christian option only because consuming passion for God takes over one’s life.

This fits the biblical picture we noted above. The barren who lament their emptiness and sterility find that God alone fills their life. God brings life to the dead womb of Sarah; God removes Hannah’s shame; God breathes life into the womb of Elisabeth; and God’s Spirit renews creation in the body of Mary. For the Bible and for genuine Christian tradition and, I believe, human experience itself, the only passion that can eclipse the passion of sexual love is the passion of faith. So, the Bible suggests that the vow of chastity, like the vows of obedience and poverty, takes its radical meaning from the vibrant primordial bond between God and the believer. Without a consuming passion for God, a celibate life remains in this biblical view, just that: a solitary, impoverished life. If we can speak of the

⁵⁶ Donald Senior and Stuhmueller, The Biblical Foundations for Mission, New York: Orbis Books, 1983, P. 75.

witness value of celibacy, a witness that comes from the heart of the scriptures: A consuming passion for God is at the core of human existence. For any child of God, celibate or married to substitute any other passion even one like sexuality, which the Bible prizes, as the defining centre of human life is, in the Biblical view, doomed to disillusionment.

In the case of the Evangelical virtue of celibacy we have to deal with a structure that is always completely twofold, made up of a pair of components, a mystical element and a situation in one. The mystical element of celibacy is immediately connected with following Christ in the sense of expectation of the second coming and awareness of the parousia.⁵⁷ More than that, the great choice for celibacy must always be in order that one is able to attend more freely to the life of the Kingdom of Heaven.

St. Paul says; "I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman (virgin) is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world how she may please her husband.(1Cor. 7:32-34)" Thus the great choice for celibacy must always be in order that one is able to attend more freely to the life of the Kingdom of Heaven. The means of protecting the celibate life is our awareness and prayer. "Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mt. 26:41)."

⁵⁷ Johannes B. Metz, Follower of Christ, The Religious Life and the Church, New York: Paulist Press, 1978, P. 60.

3.3 THE APPLICATION OF THE STUDY AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AS A CONCLUDING REMARK

From the study, we can come to realize/ learn that there are very nice points and findings that can be so applicable so as to make celibacy and intimacy more meaningful and understandable. The vow of celibacy lived out of freely chosen values rather than limiting the possibility of arriving at the fullness of life and love in our selves and consequently in others through us, helps those who are called to reach this fullness and bring it about in our world.

Going through different proposed readings and referring to my personal experience, I came to understand how the vow of celibacy is important for the one who makes it and for the entire community surrounding him or her and finally for the whole society. It is true that when this vow is freely chosen and well lived, it supposes to promote life by allowing the one who made it to be at the service of life and love. The main goal of this vow is to be always at the service of the Kingdom of God. It is often referred to as a witness of the divine love of the world. It is the pilgrimage, a school through which one learns how to accept himself or herself and to accept the challenges of personal sexuality. The model of this authentic life is Jesus Christ who by the 'agape' taught us how to love and serve everybody. Agape is a love that is called for by Jesus Christ where a person loves that is unconditional and there is no reward or payment.

All Christians are called to love, to serve, to be chaste in different way: marriage celibacy, and single state. This is a call to practice the commandment of love within the boundaries of one's life choice. Chastity is a way, a path to produce life marked by true and universal love. Chastity is a challenge to orient well our sexuality and the power of our sexual energies in order to foster relationship and relations of love. Celibacy is not fleeing from sexuality, as some people thinking, but it is to encounter it and to live genuinely with affection and mutual care by using its energy of relating and loving. When sexuality is well embraced, it reflects positive attitudes thus fidelity, meaningful goals, discipline, sublimation and integration. It is good to appreciate one's sexuality as a natural and normal part of our life so that we may live in harmony. Sometimes solitude is felt, but this should not scare us. Through solitude we learn how to face life and to accept pains. It strengthens our faith and our intimacy with God.

If religious sisters are helped all along in their formation to live in openness by sbaring done with peers or with elders, it is a great support to their religious life. My experience is that whenever I had an occasion of sharing how I lived my sexuality and when I listened to others, it was a great help to come to accept and bear with its various challenges. I always found the community, where sisters are friends in the Lord, a wholesome place to live celibacy. The community is a place where sisters live in strong relations of friendship. Chastity is the essence of loving people, establishes good relationship with others, commitment and openness to them. Jesus is the model because he is the one who lived chastity at ease with everybody. In Lk.7: 36-57, we learn that he forgave; he

loved every man and woman. Celibacy if well understood frees people and leads them to be creative in all they do. We notice, for example, that many schools and hospitals run by religious have a good reputation because of their hard work and care. Their life-commitment frees them for this ministry and they do it with love.

For some people who do not accept their sexuality, there is a danger of getting some psychological and spiritual problems as result of rejection: severity, denial of God, proud spirit, arrogant heart, lack of mercy; in this situation there is no sign of love. The vow of celibacy is not an emptying of love like this, but a form of loving and giving service. As highlighted in the book of Fr. Shorter, *Celibacy and African Culture*, celibacy is a sign-value presented in a credible ideal. So it has to produce a fruitful life. It is a life full of peace, love, joy, friendship, and charity. The vowed person relates with others without fear and compromise. Chastity is a means to growth and to affective growth. It is a sacrificial love. It is spiritually and socially fertile. It is an eschatological and prophetic life.

A peace and self-love within my own heart, which comes from knowing that I am the “beloved,” is a prerequisite to any type of consecration. In the community where I live, I am aspiring to live the holiness of religious life and struggling to reach the ideals of the vows I made. I come across different points, which help to grow and challenge me. This topic meets very well the desire of my congregation, which is to extend the Kingdom of God in us and around us. As it is highlighted in chapter one and two of *Disarming the heart* by John Dear, S. J., it is important to have a reconciled and peaceful and a united heart in order to know

and love oneself. I discovered that some events helped me to grow in this self-knowledge both of my gifts and limits or weaknesses.

I need to acknowledge that I am the beloved of God, created in God's image. For this I am called to reflect this image in my daily life by self-love, love of God and love of others. In the process of my reflection, I have discovered things, which help me to grow in accepting myself and having time to dialogue with my unique life situation by cultivating value of humility. Self-love and humility go together and lead me to the accept my limits. A respectful listening to myself and a deep abiding self-love bring unity within myself. When I am comfortable with myself, it is the time that I manage to live fully my relation with God and others. I really let God be God of my life so that I can welcome others with joy and love. The more I become aware of myself, the more I am able to build my relations with others. I remember who others are "created in the image of God, they are God's children like me" and I orient all my attitudes towards them with respect. This helps me to choose life always living out of disarmed heart and refuse to cooperate with evil or injustice. By living with others I am called to interact positively, to have disinterested love, to love in action by seeking to create community, to be ready to sacrifice for mutuality in order to restore a community free from violence. When my action disarms, reconciles and helps others to see the reality of equality, love and respect, I become the instrument of non-violence. It is a gift that I receive from God; I have to keep it faithful by saying "yes" to no-violence and "no" to violence. All this is the

witness of the presence of the Kingdom of God within and around me. These are my thoughts as I end this study, things which make me to grow in God's image.

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APPENDIX Sr. Claudette's seminar, **FRIENDSHIP IN THE LIFE OF
CONSECRATED CELIBATES** given from 11th April to 2nd May 2001 to the second
year students of Institute Of Spirituality And Religious Formation

I. Framework for Understanding Consecrated Celibacy.

Preliminary considerations - Clarification of terms

A. Distinction between Celibacy and Consecrated Celibacy

Celibacy: state of being unmarried, for whatever reason. Therefore, the person is free to marry.

The appropriate form of chastity: abstention from genital relations (fornication or adultery).

However, many people assume that celibacy includes sexual activity. Simply being unmarried is not religiously significant to people today.

There are many reasons why people choose not to marry - from the utterly selfless to the totally selfish, e.g., "my career", children get in the way, a partner would demand too much of my time and energy, apathy, etc. For religious, this means that if our celibacy is to witness to anything in particular, it must involve more than celibacy as such.

Consecrated celibacy: the defining characteristic of religious life as a public lifestyle in the Church.

- it must be a *free* choice to remain unmarried
- it is an *intentionally permanent commitment*, for the whole of one's life, that is, to make non-marriage a state of life, not only for "a time," i.e., until one meets the right person!

NOTE: We are talking about the state of life as such, not about people who have left religious life. This is not a judgement of them. Judgement is God's business.

The appropriate form of chastity: abstinence from genital relationships, the same as for any Christian celibate.

Basic notions or considerations following upon the distinction between celibacy and consecrated celibacy:

1. What about the inner meaning and significance of consecrated celibacy for the ecclesial community? There are 5 dimensions:

i) It must be religiously motivated and personally meaningful to the person.

Recall personal attachment to Christ (mystical/nuptial) and ministerial concerns (ascetical/apostolic).

[p. 209 - Schneiders does not agree with those who argue that celibacy could be validly accepted as a condition for access to ordination. She maintains that genuine consecrated celibacy must be freely chosen as personally meaningful and for religious motives].

ii) For the individual concerned, chosen as the best path to affective growth and development.

For most people the best way is commitment to one other person in marriage. For consecrated celibates, it may never be clear to others or even ourselves why it is the best way for us, except that it flows from a deep conviction of being called by God.

Inadequate reasons for choosing consecrated celibacy: repression, confusion about sexual identity or orientation, fear of full sexual living, need for security, preference for a same-sex community, etc.

These factors may all play some role in adolescent choices for religious life but unless they are resolved, celibacy will be a burden. It will never become the source of affective energy for a fully human life.

iii) It is both a personal commitment to Christ and an ecclesial commitment to public ministry.

(Not simply my personal choice)

This ministry, as for all Christians, is rooted in baptism but is given a specific form by the vows.

Religious commit themselves in a particular way to the healing and transformation in Christ of the social order (a point which is made repeatedly in chapter 6). In our time, the following are an indication of the ministerial implications for religious:

- excesses and violence of our culture

- pleasure as chief good in life (hedonism)

- uncontrolled eroticism
- liberation from patriarchy and sexism
- reconciliation and community building

- pornography, sexual violence
- acceptance of homosexual persons

iv) Public witness to an important aspect of the Christian mystery. Both married and celibates must live the whole of the Christian mystery but each gives striking public witness to part of it and our complementary witness proclaims the good news.

Some aspects to which consecrated celibates give particular witness:

- the inviolability of the personal inner sanctum
- the wholeness of the person before God
- the absolute priority and real all-sufficiency of God in the Christian life
- the totality of the demand of the reign of God
- the reality of the resurrected life both in this world and after death.

[This is the experience of every mature Christian but it stands out with particular clarity in the consecrated celibate whose celibacy is not a burden, but freely chosen].

v) A sacramental living out of aloneness or loneliness, an important aspect of the human and Christian condition in all its mysterious paschal density. Human intimacy has limits.

For all of us loneliness must become fruitful solitude or it will become sterile isolation. Neither marriage nor celibacy is a guarantee that human loneliness will mature. Consecrated celibacy is a choice to live that loneliness to the dregs in the confident hope that union with God is a reality. A fulfilled celibate life is a sacrament of human solitude transformed substantially by the love of God into the life-giving bread of human solidarity. This is never achieved; it is always in process.

B. Celibacy, Sexuality and Genitality

2. What about how we understand the genital expression of sexuality? (A second notion which follows from the distinction between celibacy and consecrated celibacy)

Sex is not an absolute need for all normal persons. If abstinence is done freely and for right reasons, a person can be genuinely fulfilled. Sex is a strong drive but not like food and drink. If we don't have sex, we don't die. Sex is an instinct we share with animals. It is designed for preservation, not of the self but of the human species. Sex and sexuality are not the same thing. [Sexuality: masculinity or femininity, a way of living out our relational capacity].

As human beings we have a choice about how we will integrate our sexuality into our total life experience of aloneness and relationship. It may involve sex or it may not. The all-important issue is not whether we have genital relations but why or why not and how and with what result for ourselves and others. All - married or celibate - must learn how to control their sexual desires. In marriage, it may be prompted by illness, absence, physical accommodations, etc. For celibates, control must be exercised all the time. It is good to remember that everyone has to learn to deal with a degree of frustration.

If religious are to become sexually integrated they need to know more than the definition of chastity.

Four factors which help religious develop the virtue of chastity:

1. As for any other virtue, chastity must be learned slowly by trial and error, by honest acceptance of the difficulty involved, by realizing early on that everyone struggles.

We are able to admit that we all get angry, are lazy at times, fail occasionally to be moderate in food and drink, get discouraged, are tempted to abandon our commitments, sometimes deliberately hurt others, fail to accept responsibility, etc., yet we give the impression that no good religious ever sins against chastity. This promotes the unrealistic self-image that makes the creative use of failure nearly impossible. Total

II. Celibacy and Intimacy

The most demanding challenge of religious celibacy does not come from sexual abstinence but from sacrifice of marriage. There are profound implications when one chooses not to marry for religious reasons.

There are three crucial development tasks for the adult (from Erik Erikson, psychologist)

1. Achieving *identity* or sense of the self;
2. Achieving *intimacy* or the capacity to transcend the self in self-giving love, to be able to cross the boundaries of the self and allow those boundaries to be crossed without losing one's identity but, on the contrary, enhancing it;
3. The fruition of selfhood and relationship in *generativity* or undertaking of caring responsibility for the next generation through physical or spiritual parenting.

Normally adults manage these tasks through marriage. But marriage is not a guarantee of achieving intimacy. Divorce statistics indicate that it is rather rare. But, marriage supplies the normal context through privacy, commitment, exclusivity, fidelity, sexual expression, public support, all of which foster such growth.

Lifelong celibacy is a dangerous choice because one thereby renounces the normal context for meeting this developmental challenge and thereby risks never developing the capacity for genuine intimacy. We have to face this reality. It's not enough to affirm that love of God satisfies all our hungers and protects us from failure.

The reality: some religious remain childish all their lives: giggling little girls; comments a.d slurs about women so that everybody laughs (See top of p. 219)

Other very serious results from remaining childish: child molestation, rape, homosexual promiscuity.

Besides the above, displacement of intimacy needs in unhealthy ways is also observed in:

- over-dependence and subservience to superiors
- reliance on authoritarian uses of power in work relationships
- hypochondria (imaginary physical ailments), compulsive masturbation
- over-eating, addiction to drugs and alcohol, workaholism
- ritualistic piety, rigid adherence to rules and rites, perfectionism

These are not only celibate problems, but those of anybody who doesn't successfully negotiate life's demands for maturity. However, religious need to realize that taking vows does not protect them from these hazards or absolve them from the major developmental tasks of adulthood, those which deal with achieving affective and relational maturity.

Most tragic failure of all is in the spiritual realm. The ability to love God and neighbour wholeheartedly, which is after all the only fully adequate motivation for the choice of celibacy, rests on the capacity for human intimacy. Two hard facts: one who cannot love human beings cannot love God and, one cannot achieve intimacy alone. We need some real sense of personal identity to be capable of intimacy.

However, we do not complete the achievement of our identity before we address the challenge of relationships; it happens at the same time. We find out who we are by finding out what we mean to others, especially significant others. We cannot be intimate with others in general. We are closer to some than to others.

So, the consecrated celibate foregoes the normal path to human affective maturity but cannot fail to develop affectively because that means never experiencing the fullness of the love of God. We cannot

uninterrupted success in the spiritual life is not possible. Therefore to grow and develop, a person must learn to use failure wisely.

2. Helping religious attend to and therefore learn something about their own sexual responses. If we are shocked by our own responses, deny them or repress them, feel guilty . . . we'll never learn appropriate and healthy ways to handle our sexuality. General rules are not very helpful.

3. Religious must learn to live and behave in a two-sex universe, to be genuinely warm, loving human beings. We must be able to relate to, enjoy the company of, and work well with people of both sexes. This means overcoming fear or aversion or learning to be with a person who is attractive to us without sexually loading the situation. Need to address attitudes of fear, arrogance, superiority or inferiority, prudery, coldness. All are counter-productive.

4. Religious need to develop adequate reasons for sexual abstinence as well as healthy alternative routes to human maturity in the relational sphere. Tradition, social pressure, fear of the consequences: these are not adequate reasons for lifelong sexual abstinence. They may control external behaviour but they will not sustain an individual for life.

C. The Issue of Sexual Abstinence

The "third way": to engage in genital sex if it is private, does not cause scandal or harm to either party. With reference to the ideal, and as a statement of principle, this is NOT a viable option.

Four considerations

1. Sexual intercourse is the expression of total and exclusive self-commitment to another. It is not compatible with another total life commitment which excludes the beloved. To give full and unreserved access to our body (the effective sign of our self) to another person and to accept the same gift from that other person is symbolically to express total self-commitment. [More on p. 216]

2. Sexual relations with someone to whom one is not permanently, faithfully, and exclusively committed can never really be fair to the partner no matter how willing the other is. The kind of love that is being expressed sexually cannot and will not be embodied in the only lifestyle that can adequately express it, namely, a full, public, permanent, faithful and exclusive relationship.

3. Secretly, to fill the loneliness of celibate life, publicly undertaken as a witness to the adequacy of divine love with the kind of sexual relationship deliberately surrendered by the profession of celibacy radically subverts the celibate witness in the church. It is also radically selfish to seek the joys of a publicly committed relationship without undertaking its responsibilities and obligations either to the other person or to society.

4. Religious profession is a public commitment - a fundamental component of public trust that fosters mutual respect. The publicly committed celibate who engages in an ongoing sexual relationship lives a lie and undermines that trust . . . just as adultery gives rise to suspicion. Therefore, abstinence from genital relationships is integral to consecrated celibacy and must remain the ideal within which and not outside of which we raise the important questions of friendship and its role and appropriate expression in religious life.

pass the challenge to intimacy. This means settling for perpetual childhood. If we do, we subvert the very purpose for which consecrated celibacy is undertaken.

There are two elements, or two dimensions, to the celibate quest for intimacy:

1. Contemplation, mystical prayer - deeply experienced union with God/Christ.

Contemplation is an affectively involving, psychologically transforming experience of the presence and activity of God in the very depths of one's being. It is not something we can achieve by willing it. It is the flowering of a life of enlightened fidelity to prayer. God reveals God's face, even if only in fleeting moments to the faithful person. This means that formation in a life of prayer is absolutely necessary for a meaningful religious life.

Intimacy with God, not dutiful performance of routines but experienced union with One whom we know (not think or believe, but *know*) loves us individually, tenderly, and in psychologically fulfilling ways that defy communication to others but which deeply nourish our heart, is essential to the life of consecrated celibacy. This is not a suggestion that we should turn our prayer into a quest for unusual experiences. It is a suggestion that we should become people of profound prayer knowing that God who is faithful beyond our power to imagine will fulfill our deepest human desires in ways we could not think to suggest and could never describe. Intimacy with God is not one way to live religious life meaningfully. It is the only way. It is as crucial for the religious as intimacy with one's spouse is for the married person, and for the same reasons.

(Schneiders, NEW WINE SKINS, 223).

2. Human friendship - necessary for all people. For the celibate, friendship is a kind of "sacrament."

Friendship is a relationship

- between equals, developed in a natural way, or becoming so through the power of love
- of mutuality - endless delight in each other's company

and it surpasses all other forms of union, even sexual union.

In friendship we experience equality, mutuality, free and generous sharing, ease of communication, support and affirmation, joy in each other's company, general enhancement of energy that comes from being with and doing things with people whose presence we truly relish.

All of us, whether celibate or married, need a variety of close friends of both sexes. Some people have many; others, a few. Both inside and outside community, true friends call us out of the isolation that celibacy can easily engender. Friends are people with whom we can be ourselves - we don't have to perform for them - with whom we can relate naturally - no special "face" - we share ideas, projects, things but especially ourselves - feelings, fears, hopes - we don't have to measure or weigh our words, not afraid to say what is in our heart - never fear betrayal. They will not laugh at us or talk about us disparagingly. "With friends we are always vulnerable but never in danger!" (P. 224).

One of the greatest sufferings of celibate persons especially as they grow older is the deep aching realization that no one really cares for or about them - only perfunctory or genial contact, but nothing deep down. Situation is different for the celibate who has real friends. Friends care, not because they have to or are expected to. When we hurt/are happy, they hurt/are happy. Friends are not always near each other. Often because of our primary commitment to mission, we are live far apart . . . even in times of real need. But we know in our hearts, a real friend is *with* us.

But, we are not the primary or exclusive love of any other human being. Our primary love is Christ. Through friends, we can avoid becoming bitter and isolated but a real friend is not possessive or jealous. Friendship has a "miraculous" quality that leaves us feeling graced. We have to develop friendships deliberately.

Formation in prayer and friendship gives us a realistic chance of entering into the depths of the mystery of divine love.

III. The Special Friendship in the Celibate Life

"Special friendship" happens when someone comes along who is very attractive erotically. This can be and infatuation but it can also happen between two people who have worked together, know each other through shared ministry and relaxation, have common interests, experience a deep level of comfort in being together, have freedom of communication, confidence and trust - very special!

Help in handling such instances which can be tumultuous and cause emotional upheaval:

1. Don't run away - strive to integrate the gift into the celibate commitment.
2. Learn early on the appropriateness of expression of being celibate:

Way of dressing, walking, talking, relaxing, communicating needs to be genuinely warm but not seductive. It communicates that one is personally but not sexually available, that one is interested in the other and open to friendship but not seeking a sexual relationship. It asks for a friendship that respects boundaries. Sending the right signals is learned behaviour, usually from people who love us enough to risk telling us how we come across. The religious who want to remain celibate are aware of all to this and do not drift through life "being open to whatever happens." They realize they're not single, "unmarried," but celibate. Their love is a consecrated love. Precautions come at the level of personal decision which makes them not open to a sexual encounter and that's what they communicate indirectly or directly if necessary. When another person seems not to respect our boundaries, it is sometimes an indication that we have not communicated our personal intentions very well.

We need clearly to communicate that our commitments are not open to negotiation - not because we're afraid - but because we're happy and want to share their meaningfulness with others in integrity.

We can't be naive. We cannot always depend on the maturity of others. We have to stay in control of ourselves and seek to develop relationships within a context of respectful mutual reserve.

Celibate friends are not a couple. Every occasion that reminds them of real renunciations that a celibate commitment involves is bound to be painful. A person who is not generally disciplined in others areas, e.g., food, drink sleep, work, physical self-care, ministry responsibility and community obligations, will not likely be strong with regard to his/her relationships

Danger signals jealousy, suspicion, prying, losing interest in projects that don't involve the other.

Celibate friends are not life-partners, not lovers. While privacy and intensity are characteristic of intimate friendship, exclusiveness and possessiveness are not and should not be characteristic of celibate friendship. If Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered, we can be sure that he learned intimacy from the people whom he loved. Jesus challenges us to love deeply, and to answer such a challenge is to risk mistakes, suffering, disappointment with ourselves and others, even real tragedy. Not to answer it is to choose not to live. Our capacity for intimacy with the God to whom we have given our lives and our capacity to offer Gospel life and love to others depends upon the development of our own affective potential. Jesus' ultimate and only command: "Love one another as I have loved you"

(Jn 15:12).